

CONNECT



MAY 2023

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE FEDERATION

NEW BRANCH CHAIR

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**DO OFFICERS WANT
INDUSTRIAL RIGHTS?**

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Chair: Barry Horton
Secretary: Pete Nightingale

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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR



By Barry Horton, chair of West Mercia Police Federation

I want to open by saying it is an incredible privilege to represent you as chair of West Mercia Police Federation.

Police officers are the bravest, most selfless people I know and the dedication and determination our members show on a daily basis never ceases to amaze me.

I will never lose sight of the fact that our job very often involves putting ourselves in harm's way and running towards danger while others might turn away.

One recent example was the rescue of a motorist from a car that had been swept along a flooded river. It was dramatic stuff and made the national news that night.

Viewers watch those officers jump into the water without hesitation and the only thing on their mind was getting the woman out of the car and back onto dry land and safety.

It took real courage but you can bet the officers involved played the whole thing down with a shrug and a 'just my doing job' which in a way makes it even more remarkable.

Because being a police officer isn't just another job and I think it would be wrong to try to categorise it as such.

When we join the Force we swear an oath of allegiance to the Crown and that puts us outside the normal employer-employee relationship.

We become servants of the Crown and, in doing so, relinquish many of the industrial and employment rights enjoyed by most people and in recent months that has become something of a hot topic within policing.

We have seen our colleagues in the ambulance service go on strike to press home their claims for fairer pay and conditions and we were called upon to help frustrated passengers at crowded train stations during the railway workers' strikes.

NHS workers have also staged high profile walk-outs and border security staff at ports and airports felt forced to withdraw their labour when their voices fell on deaf ears.

Our pay dispute with the Government stretches back many years - an independent study suggested we had not had a proper pay rise for more than two decades - so perhaps the time has now come to consider trying to reclaim the industrial rights our predecessors gave up more than 100 years ago.

When officers gave a commitment not to strike in 1919 it was in return for a promise that they would be fairly rewarded for the difficult jobs they did and that their unique position in society would be properly recognised and respected.

But we are no longer convinced that those promises are still being honoured and feel our membership should be given the chance to discuss the pros and cons of calling for a return of industrial rights.

These would take many forms and strike action would always be a last resort as far as I'm concerned but I, and some other Federation branch chairs, believe we should be asking our members if they want us to raise the issue of industrial rights on their behalf.

I will keep everyone posted on that but in the meantime I'll sign off by reminding members that the Police Federation is here to help and our door is always open.

Stay safe and look out for each other.

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'OFFICERS SHOULD HAVE THEIR SAY ON PURSUING INDUSTRIAL RIGHTS'



Police officers should be given the opportunity to have their say on whether they would want the same industrial rights as colleagues in other emergency services, according to West Mercia Police Federation chair Barry Horton.

Workers from across the public sector have taken industrial action in recent months as part of their battle for fair pay and conditions in the face of a cost of living crisis and soaring inflation.

As Crown servants rather than employees, police officers do not have the same rights as nurses, teachers, doctors and other key workers but their pay is worked out using a similar mechanism.

Barry said: "The Government wants to treat police officers the same way it treats other public sector industries by placing our salary decisions in the hands of the Police Remuneration Review Body.

"But this is clearly unfair because we have none of the rights that our public sector colleagues enjoy when it comes to standing up to be heard on pay – something which they have exercised recently and are likely to continue doing over the coming months.

"The issues that other workers are pushing back on are exactly the same as we face – pay and conditions."

Independent research published by the

Social Market Foundation (SMF) think tank suggested the well-documented decline in police pay over the last two decades is likely to be linked to the restrictions on police officers' right to strike, which it says has put them at a distinct disadvantage to all other key workers when it comes to pay talks.



The SMF study led to a 17 per cent pay claim which the Police Federation insists would simply bring its members' salaries back into line with fellow public sector workers.

"Our current pay uplift request is 17 per cent which would only put right the cuts to our pay over the last decade," said Barry.

"Workers in other public sectors have taken industrial action over pay and conditions but our members have no redress as the law currently prohibits such action

by police officers.

"So perhaps the time has come to ask police officers if they would want to campaign for industrial rights?"

"Industrial rights take many forms and do not always end up in taking strike action but I believe we should be asking our members if they want us to raise the issue of industrial rights on their behalf.

"The Police Federation is a member first organisation where we respond to members' views and opinions, not just those of the people at the top.

"Our members should be given the opportunity to have their say."

The police service gave up its recourse to industrial action to settle disputes more than 100 years ago.

The country was thrown into turmoil between 1918 and 1919 when more than 50,000 police officers under the guidance of the National Union of Police and Prison Officers (NUPPO) went on strike after repeated calls for fair pay and work conditions in the wake of the First World War.

Eventually the government of the day backed down and promised fair pay to police officers in return for them giving up the right to strike and brought in the Police Act 1919, which also established by law the Police Federation of England and Wales.

STUDENT OFFICER TELLS HOW POOR PAY MEANS SHE IS PENNY-COUNTING EACH MONTH

"I can't even afford a new passport at the moment, let alone a holiday to enjoy with my son," says a West Mercia student officer who says her salary is 'so much lower than expected' she spends the last week of the month 'counting every single penny'.

The student officer, who has asked not to be named, joined the police at the start of this year, having worked in her previous role for five years.

The mother says she felt there were no opportunities to develop her career in her former workplace and was looking for a role that would provide a better income for her family.

"I receive the exact same salary as a police officer as I did in my previous role, which is just above minimum wage - and literally by the pence," says the student officer, who works full-time having welcomed her son in 2021.

"The difference is I'm getting paid the same to do a job which requires a huge amount of responsibility, with a lot of additional pressure. At least in my previous role, I could leave my job at work. As a police officer, I can't help but take the job home with me, after all, we spend our time protecting the public and we all see so much each day.

"And I'm not alone in how I feel, those in my cohort echo my concerns."

After tax, pension contributions and National Insurance, she says her monthly

pay packet is around £1,500.

"I wasn't expecting a massive amount more as a police officer, but I did think I'd be coming home with an extra one or two hundred pounds a month," she added.

"We don't go for meals, we perhaps take my son out once a month - and we can't even afford a passport at the moment, let alone a holiday. We are literally counting every single penny each month. It is extremely disheartening."

She says her financial situation is also 'straining' her relationship with her partner, who has been forced to work six or seven days each week to bring in extra funds.

"Luckily, I have a partner who can support me but he's definitely feeling the pressure. Every single penny I bring in at the moment is going on our bills," said the student officer, who is sharing her story to bring attention to the low pay within the Force, especially for those who are training.

"The last 10 days of the month, our

priority is feeding our son - which means me and my partner are living off the likes of beans on toast. And while we haven't got to the point of needing food banks, it's definitely crossed my mind that we might soon need them."

She said that the only thing keeping her going is that there will come a time for progression at the police, ending: "This is my dream job and the only thing that keeps me motivated is that one day, I'll be able to progress within the Force."

West Mercia Police Federation secretary Pete Nightingale said members should contact the Federation office if they found themselves struggling financially.

He said: "Sadly this is not an isolated case and many of our members have been finding it hard to make ends meet throughout the cost of living crisis.

"We regularly signpost debt support to our members and are here to offer help and guidance wherever we can."



WE DON'T GO FOR MEALS, WE PERHAPS TAKE MY SON OUT ONCE A MONTH - AND WE CAN'T EVEN AFFORD A PASSPORT AT THE MOMENT, LET ALONE A HOLIDAY. WE ARE LITERALLY COUNTING EVERY SINGLE PENNY EACH MONTH. IT IS EXTREMELY DISHEARTENING.

'HOME OFFICE MUST COMMIT TO IMPROVE OFFICER PAY'

Home Secretary Suella Braverman's calls for common sense policing must be matched by a commitment to improve officer pay and conditions, according to West Mercia Police Federation chair Barry Horton.

Ms Braverman gave a speech at the Public Safety Foundation in which she set out her ethos for common sense policing which includes "a relentless focus on fighting crime, catching criminals, and keeping the public safe".

She said the public wanted to see officers "pursuing good old fashioned criminal justice rather than social justice" and took a swipe at forces which had "completely abandoned impartiality in favour of taking partisan positions - sometimes even engaging in political argument on Twitter".

"Now I believe in the police. But the

policing in which I believe isn't riven with political correctness, but enshrined in good old fashioned common sense", said Ms Braverman.

Barry said most police officers would agree with Ms Braverman's position but said the Force had been brought to its knees by 13 years of underfunding which had to be addressed.

"Everyone wants common sense community policing and bobbies on the beat but a lot of that was lost when bore the brunt of the public sector cuts imposed by the Government's austerity programme," he said.

"That underfunding and lack of resourcing has left policing in crisis and needs to be reversed if the service is to meet the demands of the Home Secretary.

"Pay and conditions will have to improve

and the wider picture of how policing is financed also needs urgent review.

"The Police Federation has long argued that annual funding settlements don't work and need to be replaced by a model of sustainable multi-year settlements so forces can make long term strategic plans to respond to the changing nature of crime.

"West Mercia Police has just announced its uplift recruitment figures but once again training, equipping and resourcing those new officers will take time and investment and can longer operate on a rob-Peter-to-pay-Paul basis.

"Our members want to deliver the kind of police service the Home Secretary outlined in her speech but to do so they will need the wholehearted support of the Government and a commitment to improve their pay and conditions."



FORCE EXCEEDS ITS TARGET FOR POLICE UPLIFT PROGRAMME

West Mercia Police has exceeded its target of recruiting new officers under the Government's Police Uplift Programme by six per cent, according to new figures from the Home Office.

The Force was given an allocation of an extra 311 officers when the programme was launched in 2019 but exceeded that figure by 19 by bringing in a total of 330 new recruits.

It now has 2,494 officers compared with 2,164 when the uplift campaign began.

The figure is also higher than the 2010 headcount which stood at 2,349 ahead of a decade of funding cuts which saw officer numbers slump to 1,901 by March 2019.

West Mercia Police Federation secretary Pete Nightingale welcomed the increase but called on the Force and the Government to make a commitment to invest in training the new recruits and making sure they had access to the proper resources and equipment.

He said: "This is a step in the right direction and we are pleased to see an improvement in officer numbers after so many years of reductions in the workforce."

"But resources were also cut throughout that period of austerity and it is important that we now see an increase in spending on

uniform, equipment and vehicles so our new officers can carry out their jobs efficiently and effectively.

"The Force has to make sure West Mercia Police is an attractive place to work and that means fair pay and conditions and making our members feel valued and respected."

“ THIS IS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND WE ARE PLEASED TO SEE AN IMPROVEMENT IN OFFICER NUMBERS AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF REDUCTIONS IN THE WORKFORCE.

"It also means appropriate pay rises for all officers - the Police Federation is calling for 17 per cent - because otherwise they will simply leave the service for better paid jobs elsewhere."

The latest Home Office figures show that

a total of 20,951 extra recruits have joined the service across England and Wales under the Police Uplift Programme and the only Force that failed to meet its target was the Met.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said on Twitter: "In 2019 we promised to recruit 20,000 additional police officers in England and Wales to make our streets safer and protect communities. Today, I'm pleased to say we have delivered that promise."

Home Secretary Suella Braverman described it as a "historic moment for our country".

She said: "We should be immensely proud of what we've achieved in the last few years."

"Many said we couldn't do it but this is a police success, a Home Office success and a Conservative Government success."

She denied that policing was the "failure of austerity" and insisted the new recruitment figures were a success.

Asked whether it was fair to say that cuts to the police service in previous years had created problems across policing, she replied: "No. Since 2010, we see that overall crime has fallen. "When you take out fraud and online crime, it's almost 50 per cent lower than it was in 2010."

OFFICERS PRAISED FOR 'BRAVERY AND SELFLESSNESS' AFTER DRAMATIC RESCUE

West Mercia Police Federation has praised the courage of officers who risked their lives to rescue a woman from a car submerged in a flooded ford.

The officers formed a human chain to haul the woman to safety after her vehicle was swept downstream.

Bodycam footage shows the officers linking arms before one smashes the window and pulls the driver from her white Mini.

Branch chair Barry Horton said: "Once again our members have shown immense bravery and selflessness in order to save someone's life.

"They will play it down and say they were just doing their job but the fact is they put their own safety at risk to ensure this woman survived her ordeal."

The officers involved have been praised for their courage

He continued: "Police officers never know what dangers they will face when they report for duty but they put their lives on the line on a daily basis to protect people and their communities - they run towards danger when others might run away - and we should never lose sight of that.



The officers involved have been praised for their courage.

"Our members are brave, dedicated and willingly put themselves in harm's way and they should be proud of themselves."

The Worcester-based officers responded to a 999 call from the driver, who is in her 40s, at the end of April and found she was

already 10 metres downstream and submerged underwater at Walcot Lane ford at Drakes Broughton near Pershore.

Their swift actions meant the woman was successfully rescued and escaped without serious injuries.

PENSION FORECASTS

West Mercia Police Federation is now funding an individual pension forecast for officers who are in their last 10 years' service.

This service is free to Federation members and is provided by Steve Grange, an ex-West Midlands Police officer and former Federation branch secretary and representative who is appropriately qualified to help officers.

Steve can provide a pension calculation to an officer who was a previous member of the 1987 or 2006 pension scheme and is due to retire in the next 10 years.

This will include what the pension would have been without the remedy and what it will now be with the remedy applied. It will include retirement at a milestone date (30 years or 35 years for 1987 and 2006 respectively) and at milestone ages (55 and 60) with other specific dates upon request.

The calculation will provide the details of the maximum annual pension or the maximum lump sum as an option and can also include details as to any tax liability on that lump sum if requested.

As a member of the West Midlands Police Pension Department, Steve is updated with the latest information that is coming

out of the National Police Chiefs' Council working group and was also informed very quickly about the changes to the commutation factors recently.

A member who has already contacted Steve said: "I just wanted to say a huge thanks for extending the pension forecast offer to the non-Federated ranks. I've been in contact with Steve who has been amazing and incredibly helpful."

If you would like a forecast, please [email the Federation office](#).

Steve will require certain information such as date of joining, rank, date of birth, details of any part-time service or unpaid leave and any pension from a previous employer.

GROUP INSURANCE SCHEME OPEN TO STAFF

The West Mercia Police Federation Group Insurance Scheme is again open to police staff.

The scheme can help those subscribing save a significant amount of money. For example, an annual worldwide family travel policy from the Post Office for a like for like policy for a 40-year-old member, partner and two children costs £385.11* per year.

This compares to the entire annual cost of £342 (paid monthly at £28.50) for the entire Group Insurance Scheme.

Other benefits under the scheme include:

- Life insurance £115,000
- Accident benefits up to £100,000
- Legal expenses
- Critical illness £10,000
- Worldwide family travel insurance
- Mobile phone insurance
- Motor breakdown cover for member and partner.

[Full scheme details.](#)

The first three months of subscriptions are FREE OF CHARGE (if you haven't been a member before) then they are £28.50 per month by salary deduction.

[Apply online now.](#)

You will need to register on your first visit by entering your email address and selecting West Mercia Police Federation from the list.

You will also be entered in a prize draw for a chance to win an Amazon Fire 7 if you are accepted between now and 30 June 2023.

If you have any questions, please email the Federation office.

*Evidence available upon request.

GET ON YOUR BIKE FOR COPS FUNDRAISER



Former West Mercia Police Federation secretary Steve Butler on a previous PUT.

West Mercia Police Federation members are being encouraged to take on a 200-mile bike ride in aid of Care of Police Survivors (COPS).

Hundreds of officers representing police forces across the country will take part in the annual Police Unity Tour later this summer – and places are still available for West Mercia Police Federation members.

Serving and retired police officers and Specials can take part in the event, which raises funds for COPS, the UK-wide charity dedicated to helping the families of police officers and staff who have lost their lives on duty.

Branch chair Barry Horton said: "Policing is a unique job. Every day officers put themselves in harm's way to protect the public and far too many of them have been killed in the line of duty. "This bike ride is dedicated to them and their memory.

"It's a fantastic event in which you can make new friendships, create memories for a lifetime and show support for the families of police officers and staff who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

"West Mercia officers and staff – including our former branch secretary Steve Butler – have taken part in the tour in previous years so this is an opportunity for more people to get involved."

The challenge starts on Friday 28 July



The PUT team.

and ends on Sunday 30 July at the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, where a service of remembrance is being held by COPS for fallen friends and colleagues.

During the event, each cyclist will wear a wristband specifically dedicated to a fallen officer - with these bracelets given to family members of those officers at the end of the ride.

This year, the chapter is appealing for 30 riders from across the West Mercia, West Midlands, Staffordshire and Warwickshire forces.

Barry said: "Places are filling up but there's still time to sign up and to be part of this amazing event."

It costs £150 to take part, with a commitment to raise a minimum of £400.

[Find out more information or register.](#)

'I COULDN'T HAVE ASKED FOR MORE'

An officer supported by West Mercia Police Federation secretary Pete Nightingale during a conduct case says he could not have asked for more in terms of the help he was given.

The officer wrote: "Hi Sarge, honestly really respect everything you have done for me and if anyone at work was ever in trouble I would put them in your direction.

"You have been great, honest and open and actually put me at ease. You come highly recommended and I can see why. I know you will take this with a pinch of salt and know the result wasn't what we wanted but, for communication and being there, I couldn't have asked for more.

"Thank you for being you and for being on it. I am extremely glad I'm in the Fed and you're leading our Federation."

Pete said he was pleased to have been able to offer support to the member in their hour of need.

"Being a Fed rep can be a challenging and demanding role but when you know the support you have given to a colleague has made a difference it really does make it all worthwhile," he explained.

"As with this member, we may not always get the outcome we would like, however, the most important thing for me is that we are there, helping guide an officer through processes which can be extremely stressful for them.

"While I am now in a full-time Federation role, it is worth noting that our workplace representatives provide support to their colleagues while also doing their 'day job'. They offer advice to colleagues on a range of issues covering not just conduct but also health and safety, equality and wellbeing."

[Get to know your Federation team.](#)

SHIFT SLIP PROPOSAL SHELVED

The Federation has welcomed the news that the Force has withdrawn plans to 'slip' a night shift back to provide extra resources on the busier late shifts.

Chief Superintendent Paul Moxley confirmed that the Force would not proceed with the proposal following a consultation exercise in March and feedback from the Federation.

He explained: "The feedback from everyone was constructive and it was very clear there were considerable concerns raised."

Pete Nightingale, secretary of West Mercia Police Federation, said he was pleased the Force had taken note of the feedback and listened to the concerns raised, some of which related to the impact the changes would have on the quality of the service being provided to the public.

"I think this is an illustration that we, as a Federation, can help with negotiation and influencing for our members. It was clear that these changes were likely to have a negative impact on morale and the safety of our officers," said Pete.

PTSD AND ITS EFFECT ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

PTSD can widely affect those who work in law enforcement and our expert personal injury lawyers can help those in need

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a delayed and often devastating response to trauma that can provoke behavioural change, suicidal tendencies and recurring distressing memories, nightmares and flashbacks.

Common sounds such as children shouting in the street and sirens blaring can cause terrifying repercussions to those suffering with the disorder.

Once commonly used to describe a condition soldiers developed after being at war, the disorder can now affect anybody who has been exposed to trauma, and that includes those who work in law enforcement. Though dealing with traumatic scenes is somewhat part of the job role, daily views of traumatic scenes with little time to process them can have a lasting impact on the officers.

Close to one in five police officers and staff in the UK have symptoms consistent with PTSD, and with so many officers reporting feelings of stress, fatigue and anxiety, it's up to the police force to ensure that there are support, risk assessments, psychological training and other

resources in place to ensure the mental and emotional wellbeing of those in law enforcement are looked after.

However, that isn't always the case, and many officers can be left dealing with PTSD, which can lead to a harrowing effect on their day to day lives.

Did you know that Slater and Gordon handle PTSD cases? Under our personal injury services for Police Federation members, our experts are here to help you take the next steps when it comes to making a personal injury claim, for both physical and mental issues, which includes PTSD claims.

Recently, our head of serious injury, Matthew Tomlinson, handled a landmark case for retired detective, John Cahill, who suffers from PTSD, a result from prolonged exposure to child abuse images.

With no psychological training and risk assessments in place, John has experienced years of unprocessed and untreated trauma, affecting his personality, wellbeing and family life.

After working closely with medical

professionals to produce a comprehensive psychiatric report, and a subsequent five-day trial, it was concluded that John should have been screened throughout his time working on the child abuse cases, which would have identified measures to mitigate stress, trauma and harm caused to John's mental wellbeing.

How can Slater and Gordon help?

Your personal injury claim will be covered by the Police Federation, and you won't be required to have legal expense insurance. Your claim will not cost you or the Police Federation anything, even if the claim isn't successful; we take all the risk. If your claim is successful, you will retain 100 per cent of the damage we recover on your behalf.

Most lawyers will charge up to 25 per cent of a client's damages if they bring a claim for injuries caused by other people's negligence.

We're specialists in personal injury and ensuring the right amount of compensation for police officers injured on and off duty is awarded.

To speak to one of our experts in personal injury lawyers, please call 0330 107 6484.



"Now the pressure's gone, I can get back to my police work."

You never know when you're going to need legal advice. Slater and Gordon have been advising and supporting Police Federation members for more than 60 years, taking the legal stress away and leaving you to focus on keeping people safe.

For all life's legal needs and with offices throughout the UK.

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